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Editorially Speaking—

Are the Democrats Splitting?

How serious is the rift in Democratic ranks over foreign policy?

We ask that question after receiving a communique from a group which calls itself, "Democrats for Democratic Foreign Policy."

It protests ("vigorously"): "Illusion of American omnipotence; arrogant intervention in other countries; squandering of our boys and our billions; infliction of wholesale death and suffering upon innocent people; provocations which could lead to world war."

And it states, "We urge our President to suspend the bombing of North-Viet Nam and to give U.N. Secretary U Thant an unequivocal mandate to get the Viet Cong to join us in a cease-fire and negotiations to terminate the war and permit Viet Nam self-determination as specified in the 1954 Geneva Agreements."

We've never heard of this splinter group, or any of its listed members, and might take this as just another minority protest. Except for one thing. It questions if "there is anything Democratic in a so-called bipartisan foreign policy made by the following Republicans: Dean Rusk, Secretary of State; Robert S. McNamara, Secretary of Defense; William Bundy, assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs; Arthur Dean and William C. Foster, chief negotiators in Geneva; CIA directors McCone and Raborn; Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge; McGeorge Bundy, special assistant to the President; Sen. Everett M. Dirksen, who nominated Goldwater, and whom the President now consults."

And it adds: "Meanwhile, the President has been disregarding the misgivings of such outstanding Democrats as Adlai E. Stevenson, late ambassador to the United Nations; Sen. J. W. Fulbright, chairman of Senate Foreign Relations committee; Sen. Mike Mansfield, Democratic majority leader of the Senate; Sen. Wayne Morse; Sen.

Ernest Gruening; Sen. Gaylord Nelson; Sen. Frank Church; Sen. Joseph S. Clark; Sen. George McGovern; Chester Bowles, ambassador to India; George Kennon, now at Princeton."

Now we weren't aware that all of those Democrats, most notably Mr. Stevenson, had publicly opposed our Vietnamese policy. Nor were we aware that all of the foreign affairs experts mentioned were Republicans.

That Republicans have had an active voice in foreign policy under Democratic Administrations (and vice versa during the Eisenhower years) has long been acknowledged. One strength of our foreign policy has been its bi-partisan nature.

If leading Democrats in increasing numbers do criticize their own Administrations' conduct of foreign affairs, it can only weaken that foreign policy. And rather ironically, make what is basically a bi-partisan approach, a political one.

The Democrats in question do just that in their piece, saying, "Not only is foreign policy formulated by Republicans, the 'bi-partisan' policy is to the RIGHT of Republicanism. This fact is reflected in a recent Harris survey which indicates that Johnson's popularity with Goldwater Republicans is rising; while he has lost since March 13 per cent of the Republicans who voted for him last year, and his popularity among Democrats has slipped."

We most certainly question their conclusion that it is his handling of foreign affairs that has caused Mr. Johnson to lose favor with Republicans who voted for him in 1964. We have the feeling there are a few "Great Society" measures involved in that change of heart.

And if they want to assure that the Republicans remain Republicans, all the Democrats have to do is to split on foreign policy.